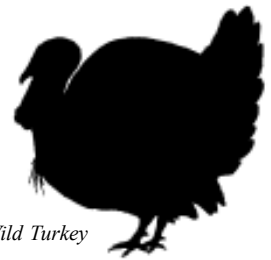




California  
Quail

# Nature's Call

An Activity Newsletter for Kids by Utah's Project WILD--Fall 2000



Wild Turkey

## Welcome to Utah's Gallinaceous Bird Gallery! (That's gal-li-nay-shus.)

**Gallinaceous** is the name used for the group of birds classified in the *order*: GALLIFORME. Different bird species are grouped together in categories, called *orders*, because scientists have learned some birds have many things in common. Gallinaceous birds happen to have in common the qualities of being *wild and chicken-like*. Species in this group include grouse, quail, partridge, pheasant, prairie chicken, ptarmigan and wild turkey. All are distant cousins of domesticated chickens and turkeys raised on farms today!

**Wild and chicken-like**, gallinaceous birds have short, thick down-curved bills. Their heads are small, while their bodies are round and heavy. Their wings are strong, short and rounded. They have strong feet and legs. All have tails of varying lengths, from short to long. Most gallinaceous birds actually look like barnyard chickens. Some look like miniature chickens, others look like large ones. But there is an exception. The wild turkey, as you might expect, resembles a barnyard turkey.

**Gallinaceous birds are ground-dwelling birds.** Most everything they do is on the ground, including nesting. Females create the nests by scraping indentations into the ground with their feet. When chicks hatch, they are ready for the world, with open eyes and coats of downy feathers. When gallinaceous birds eat, they feed in a manner called gleaning. These wild birds pick, pluck and scrape for seeds, insects, and other types of food from the ground, whether it is from roadside sand or the forest floor. It is easy to imagine them as barnyard chickens, but they are quite wild!

**Migration is a different matter** for gallinaceous birds. Some migrate only a few miles to lower or higher elevations, depending on the food supply. Others stay put. Gallinaceous birds cannot fly for long periods of time, but can fly strong and fast over a short distance. Compare them with Olympic runners. When in flight, gallinaceous birds are more like 50-yard dashers than long distance runners. If you ever have the chance to see one, you may remember it by its explosive flight. When startled these birds take off very quickly with a loud wing-burst. A bystander may almost feel the wind from their strong wings, yet may not catch even a glimpse of the bird!

**Twelve species of gallinaceous birds live in Utah** in a variety of habitats, from valleys and mountain peaks to deserts, prairies and forests. Seven of the twelve are native: Gambel's quail, northern sage grouse, Gunnison sage grouse, blue grouse, ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse and wild turkey. Five are non-native species (also called exotics), introduced for hunting purposes. Two of the five exotics are from other parts of North America: California quail and white-tailed ptarmigan. The other three come from other parts of the world: ring-necked pheasant (from China), chukar (from India), and Hungarian partridge (from Europe).



California Quail

Turn the page to find  
Utah's gallinaceous birds galore!

# Gallinaceous Birds Are Great!

Gallinaceous (*gal-in-ay-shus*) birds are a great group of birds. Although they all are basically chicken-like in form, they come in a range of different sizes, wear many different colors, make lots of different calls and displays, and live in a variety of different places. Pictured below are some of the gallinaceous birds that you might see in Utah. There is also some information about each that you can read to help you learn about them.

After you have read about each of the gallinaceous birds, choose one that you think is especially interesting to you. Then find another person in your class that picked the same type of bird. Within your class form groups that cover each of the different birds shown here.

Next, comes the fun part. As a class, pick a familiar song with a simple tune — maybe something like “*Mary Had a Little Lamb.*” Then, with your group, create a verse or two about your bird, using the information given about it below. If you use “*Mary Had a Little Lamb,*” for example, your chorus might be:

“*Gallinaceous Birds are Great.*  
*Yes they are. Yes, indeed.*  
*Gallinaceous Birds are Great.*  
*You’ll Learn as You Hear this Song.*”

When verses have been created for each type of bird, you can put them together to create a full song. Sing the song for another class so they can learn about Utah’s great gallinaceous birds!

\* \* \* \* \*



## White-tailed Ptarmigan:

White-tailed ptarmigans live high in the alpine tundra of Utah’s Uinta Mountains at elevations above 10,000 feet.

Willow bushes provide them with most of their winter food and shelter.

In the winter, ptarmigans grow “white-as-snow” feathers for camouflage. During the other seasons their feathers are a mottled brownish-black color to match their surroundings just as well.

Even when it’s very cold outside in winter, ptarmigans can stay warm in winter snow burrows where their body temperature and the insulating properties of snow keep the temperature 60 degrees warmer than outside.

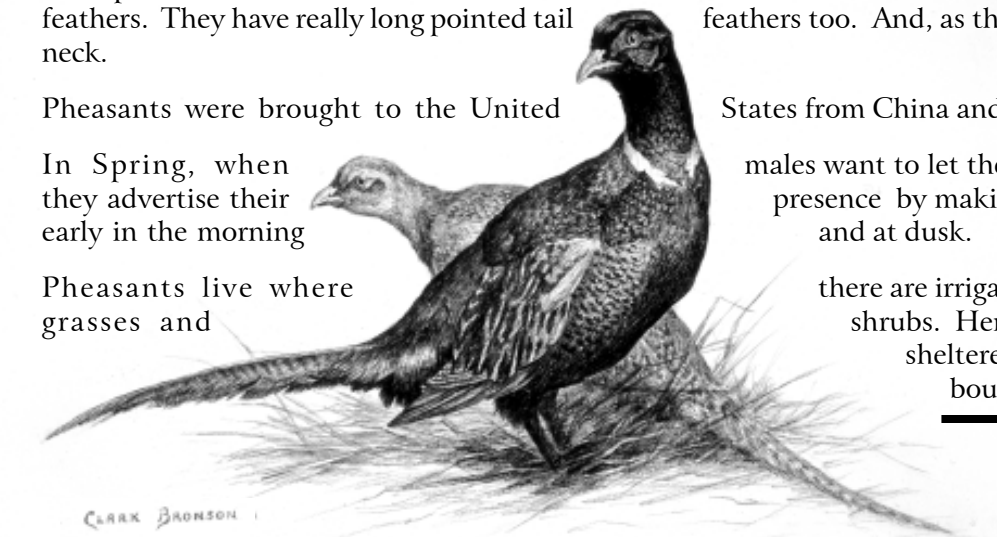
## Ring-necked Pheasant:

Male pheasants are covered with beautiful feathers. Most noticeable are their heads, decked in shiny, metallic blue-green feathers. They have really long pointed tail feathers. And, as their name implies, a white ring around their neck.

Pheasants were brought to the United States from China and India back in the late 1800s.

In Spring, when they advertise their early in the morning presence by making a loud “*skwagock*” call. They call and at dusk.

Pheasants live where grasses and there are irrigated farmlands bordered by tall shrubs. Here they can build nests in the sheltered grassy areas and feed on a bounty of waste grains.



## Blue Grouse:

Blue grouse are birds of the dense forest. For the winter they migrate upslope to thick stands of spruce and fir at higher elevations. Here they feed on the needles, buds and pollen cones of these trees. For the breeding season in spring, blue grouse return to the pine forests at lower elevations.

Males form territories first and then begin their courtship dance. During their strutting dance, males inflate two large red or yellow colored air sacs on the sides of their necks. A ring of white feathers circles each air sac when they are inflated. When the air is pushed out of the air sacs, a loud, hoot-like booming sound is heard.

Blue grouse have dark greyish-blue feathers. These feathers help them hide well in trees, like shadows in the forest. Sometimes though, even when they are discovered, they sit foolishly still instead of flying away.

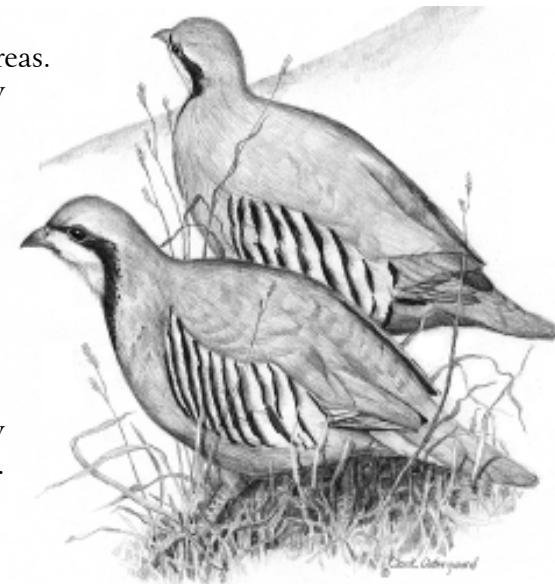
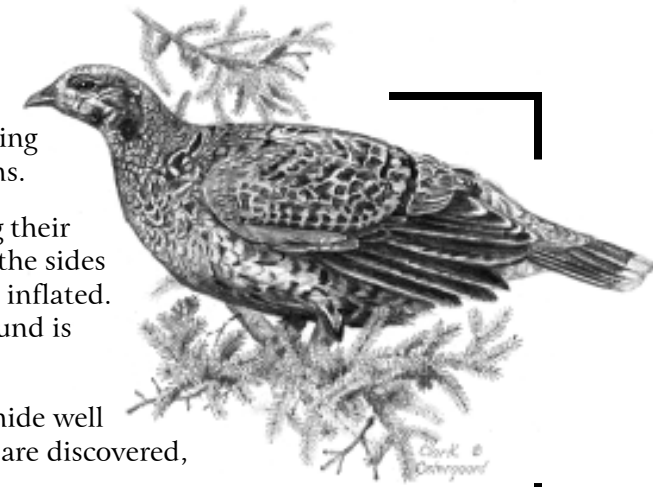
## Chukar:

Chukars make their home in the steep rocky canyons of Utah’s dry desert areas. They were brought here from Asia and the Middle East in 1936. When they arrived, they found the climate, landscape and food all to their liking - a real home away from home.

Chukars feed mainly on leaves and seeds of cheat grass. Cheatgrass is also an exotic species native to the same places as chukars. Cheatgrass wasn’t wanted because it ruins the sagebrush lands of the Great Basin.

One call chukars use sounds like “*chukar-chukar-chukar.*” This call gave the chukar its name.

Chukars are fast flyers and quick runners. Even though chuckars live in very remote and rugged areas, many hunters enjoy the challenge of hunting them.



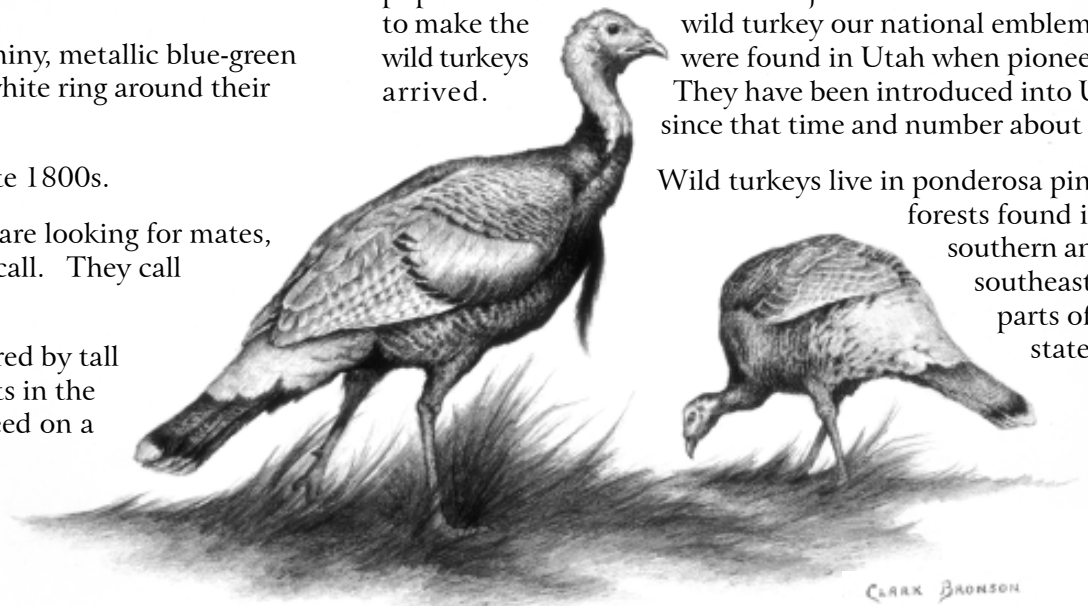
## Wild Turkey:

Wild turkeys are as American as Thanksgiving. They are the largest of the gallinaceous birds. Males, called “toms,” can weigh over 20 pounds and stand four feet tall.

Anasazi and Fremont Indians who lived in Southwest 600 to 1,000 years ago carved pictures of turkeys into rock faces to show their importance to their culture.

When Americans settled the East Coast, wild turkeys were a popular source of food. Benjamin Franklin even wanted to make the wild turkey our national emblem. No wild turkeys were found in Utah when pioneers first arrived. They have been introduced into Utah since that time and number about 7,000.

Wild turkeys live in ponderosa pine forests found in the southern and southeastern parts of the state.



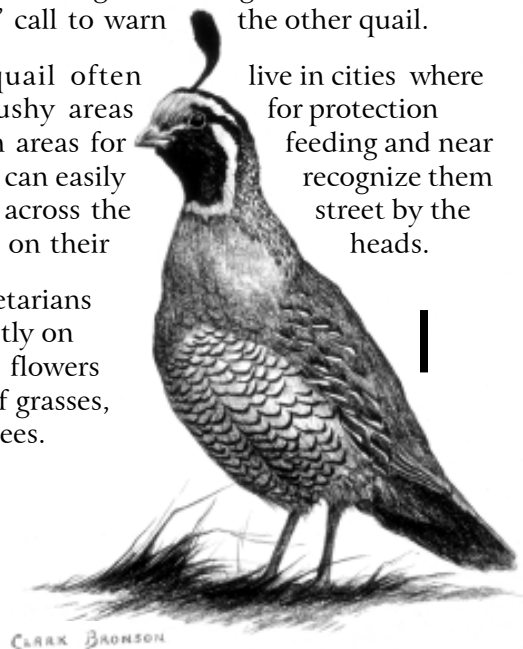
## California Quail:

California quail, the state bird of California, were first brought to Utah in 1869.

Quail live together in social groups called coveys. One male, known as the sentinel, usually watches for danger. If danger is sighted, the sentinel gives a “*kurr*” call to warn the other quail.

California quail often live in cities where there are brushy areas for protection close to open areas for feeding and near streams. You can easily recognize them as they dash across the street by the black plumes on their heads.

They are vegetarians and feed mostly on seeds, leaves, flowers and berries of grasses, shrubs and trees.

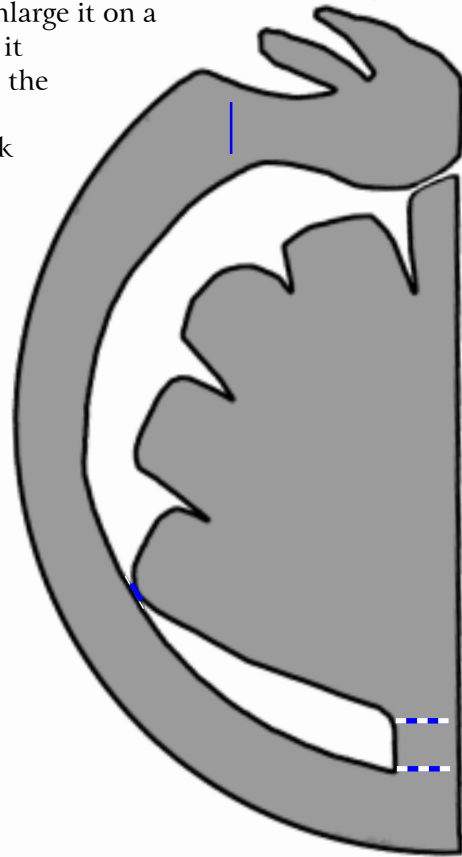
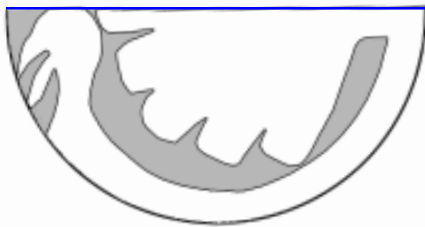


In some cultures, headdresses are used in various ceremonies and celebrations. Here's a great wild turkey headdress you can make! Just follow the instructions below. Then you can celebrate wild turkeys too!

**What you'll need:** An ordinary 9-inch diameter paper plate, a pencil, a pair of scissors, a stapler, some crayons, an 8 ½ x 11-inch piece of cardstock paper.

**What to do:**

- 1) Carefully cut out the pattern to the right. Have an adult enlarge it on a photocopy machine for you to make it twice as big (so that it measures 9 inches in length). If possible, have it copied on the cardstock paper. If this is not possible, have it copied onto regular paper, cut it out, and then trace it onto the cardstock paper.
- 2) Cut out the pattern from the cardstock paper to make a stiff template.
- 3) Fold your paper plate in half. Place the template onto the folded paper plate and line it up so it meets the edge of the plate. Carefully trace the template onto the paper plate.
- 4) Cut out the pattern traced onto the paper plate. Cut out the shaded parts (see drawing below).



- 5) While the paper plate is still folded in half, color each half of the paper plate exactly the same. Do one side first and then the other. Don't forget to draw in the turkey's eyes on each side of the head.

- 6) Flatten out the paper plate. Then turn it over and color the other side of the tail (you only have to do the tail on the back side).

- 7) Fold the fan-shaped tail back and then again upwards along the dotted lines on the original pattern so the tail stands straight up. Staple it in place.

- 8) Fold the two sides of the turkey's head together. Staple them together at the neck of the turkey.

- 9) Now, put on your turkey headdress!

